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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the present efforts of colleges and universities to offer educational opportunity to disadvantaged students, briefly reviews some of the studies in this area, and recommends guidelines for planning and implementing educational opportunity programs. The Coleman study clearly documented the problem of educational deprivation; Katz, Berger, and others have analyzed the conditions that create educational deprivation; and Gordon and Wilkerson, and Egerton have surveyed experimental and compensatory programs for students with deficient pre-college background. The surveys indicated that relatively few institutions have compensatory programs and that only a small number of disadvantaged students are reached. Though many of these programs are commendable, there seems to be a general neglect of the non-black minorities, systematic evaluation of the programs is almost nonexistent, and most programs are created without knowledge of similar programs elsewhere. In planning a compensatory program, institutions should first assess their ability to cope with disadvantaged students, establish realistic objectives, and allocate adequate funds. The ideal program should include: a recruitment program; a summer preparatory program; a special services program; and student financial aid. A system for evaluating program effectiveness must also be incorporated. (AF)

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THEORETICAL ISSUES INVOLVED IN EDUCATING THE DISADVANTAGED

by

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There appears to be some consensus of opinion that institutions of higher learning ought to become directly involved in educating the disadvantaged. The purpose of this paper is to examine the present efforts of colleges and universities in the area of educational opportunity, and, based on this examination, to recommend guidelines for the planning and implementation of educational opportunity programs.

The existence of the problem of educational deprivation has been well documented. Perhaps the most comprehensive documentation of this problem is Coleman's study, which indicated that the average minority student scored distinctly lower than the average white pupil on tests of scholastic ability and achievement at every grade level, and that this deficiency was progressively greater for the minority students at progressively higher grade levels.[1]

In addition, numerous studies have been conducted regarding the conditions that create educational deprivation. Reports

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written by Katz[2] and by Berger[3] indicate that these conditions can be classified as being: 1.) socio-economic background, 2.) personality and cultural characteristics, and 3.) inadequate educational systems. However, current research, as reviewed by Hickrod and Hubbard, emphasizes socio-economic conditions as being the major cause of this problem.[4] This is clearly pointed out in Wilson's study of the consequences of segregation, which indicated that the socio-economic composition of a school is as much a determining factor of the educational attainment of both black and white students as is the racial composition of a school.[5]

In response to the magnitude of the problem of educational deprivation, some colleges and universities have designed experimental and compensatory programs for students with deficient pre-college backgrounds. These efforts to educate the disadvantaged have been surveyed by Gordon and Wilkerson[6] and by Egerton.[7]

Of the 2,131 colleges and universities surveyed by Gordon and Wilkerson in 1964, reports were received from 610 institutions (29%), of which 224 (37%) reported that they were conducting compensatory programs. Almost half of the institutions with compensatory programs were assisting fewer than thirty disadvantaged students. Twenty-nine per cent of the institutions reporting compensatory practices were junior and community colleges, and 6% were exclusively or predominantly all black institutions.[8] Of the 215 institutions surveyed by Egerton in 1968, only 86, or 53% of those responding reported some measure of involvement in programs for disadvantaged students.[9]

The Gordon and Wilkerson survey also indicated that two types of practices prevailed in the institutions' efforts to assist disadvantaged students: practices designed to help disadvantaged students enter college, i.e., financial aid, modified admissions criteria, precollege preparatory courses, and recruiting procedures; and practices addressed to helping disadvantaged students after entering college: counseling, credit and non-credit remedial courses, instruction in study skills, tutoring, special curriculums, and lengthened time for completing degree requirements.[10]

Exemplary of the practices designed to help students enter college is the Education Improvement Project conducted by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools.[11] Project SEEK of the City University of New York[12] and the Experiment in Higher Education of Southern Illinois University[13] are examples of programs for disadvantaged students after they enter college.

The most prevalent reasons for the implementation of compensatory programs were reported as: the humanitarian aim of helping young people from disadvantaged social environments; the broader aim of conservation of the nation's human resources; and the aim of achieving a diversified student body.[14]

Although these efforts to educate the disadvantaged are commendable, they are subject to several criticisms. First, there appears to be undue neglect in providing compensatory services to American Indians, Mexican-Americans, Puerto Ricans and socially disadvantaged white youths in rural areas.[15] Second, systematic evaluation of compensatory programs and practices in higher educa-

tion appear to be almost nonexistent.[16] Third, most of the programs are created without detailed knowledge of what is being tried elsewhere in the country.[17] Fourth, and finally, it would seem to be more appropriate for administrators and faculty to consider the effectiveness of educational opportunity programs rather than to rationalize their existence as being a matter of social commitment.[18]

These criticisms could possibly provide an initial basis from which an institution interested in expanding educational opportunity can begin planning for those individuals previously neglected by higher education.

Meeth suggests that planning for an educational opportunity program should commence with the institution's assessment of its ability to cope with disadvantaged students.[19] Such an assessment, according to Flanagan, should involve all elements of the university - faculty, administration, and students.[20] Based upon the data presented from this assessment, the institution would seem to have a series of options ranging from "open-door" admissions to no action. Consideration of these options, according to Meeth, should include observation of similar ventures and submission of ideas from the entire college community with the purpose of gaining general support.[21]

An integral part of this planning process, as indicated by Cook[22] and by Jakobsberg,[23] is the determination of realistic objectives that bear a functional relationship to the problem. An example of these objectives are those which were established by the

University of Wisconsin - Milwaukee after its institutional assessment was conducted. These objectives were: 1.) the admission of 100 students per year for five years who ordinarily would not be admissable to the University; 2.) achievement of 2.0 or more grade point averages by 50% of the students each semester; and 3.) graduation of 33% of those students admitted.

The final phase of the planning process is the allocation of adequate funds for the accomplishment of the proposed objectives. Although this allocation will have to be made with the knowledge that it is uneconomic in the strict sense of systems analysis,[24] it provides a realistic base upon which an institution can assess its willingness to establish an educational opportunity program.

Both Meeth[25] and Godard[26] provide useful guidelines for structuring an educational opportunity program. Essentially, the structure of the Experimental Program in Higher Education at the University of Wisconsin - Milwaukee, consisting of modified admissions criteria, intensive advising and guidance, tutoring, and remedial courses, is representative of this model. The ideal model is that proposed by Valien, whereby locally designed programs would reflect a combination of approaches:

1.) recruitment efforts such as the Talent Search Program,

2.) a summer preparatory program such as the Upward Bound Program,

3.) a special services program to counsel, tutor and remedy academic deficiencies of disadvantaged students, and

4.) a student financial aids program which provides support for these students.[27]

Up to this point the process of program planning and implementation has been considered. This process is incomplete without incorporating a system for evaluating program effectiveness, particularly in light of the absence of such a system as previously pointed out by Gordon and Wilkerson.[28]

The model for evaluating the effectiveness of programs in public health proposed by Deniston, Getting and Rosenstock is suggested as also being applicable to educational opportunity programs. This model is intended to answer two questions: 1.) To what extent were the objectives of the program attained as the result of activities? 2.) At what cost? Application of this model requires systematic description and measurement of three program variables: resources, activities, and objectives.[29]

As Deniston indicated, if evaluation can pinpoint the problems and costs, subsequent program planning can proceed more effectively than it could in the absence of evaluation.[30]

Given the extensive nature of the problems that fall under the rubric of educational deprivation and in light of the lack of sufficient evidence as to the effectiveness of higher education's efforts in the area of educational opportunity, it would seem beneficial to the population being served, and to the institutions involved, that proper caution be used to insure adequate planning and successful operation of these efforts.

FOOTNOTES

[1]James S. Coleman, et al., Equality of Educational Opportunity, Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1966, p. 21.

[2]Irwin Katz, "The Hidden Potential of Marginal College Students," Buffalo Studies, Buffalo: State University of New York at Buffalo, Vol. II, No. 1, June 1966.

[3]Leslie Berger, "White Coat Versus Cap and Gown," (Paper read at American Orthopsychiatric Association), New York, April 1969.

[4]G. Alan Hickrod and Ben C. Hubbard, "Social Stratification, Educational Opportunity, and the Role of State Departments of Education," Education Administration Quarterly, Vol. 5, No. 4, Winter 1969, pp. 81-89.

[5]Alan B. Wilson, The Consequences of Segregation: Academic Achievement in a Northern Community, Berkeley, California: The Glendessary Press, March 1969, p. 65.

[6]Edmund W. Gordon and Doxey A. Wilkerson, Compensatory Education for the Disadvantaged - Programs and Practices: Preschool through College, New York: College Entrance Examination Board, 1966, 299p.

[7]John Egerton, "Higher Education for 'High Risk' Students," Atlanta, Georgia: Southern Education Reporting Service, Southern Education Foundation, April 1968, 59p.

[8]Gordon and Wilkerson, pp. 129-133.

[9]Egerton, p. 8.

[10]Gordon and Wilkerson, p. 134.

[11]"Education Improvement Project, A Status Report on an Action Arm of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools," Atlanta, Georgia: Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, Vol. 19, No. 3, November 1966.

[12]Berger. op. cit.

[13]Egerton, p. 18.

[14]Gordon and Wilkerson, pp. 148-149.

[15]Ibid., p. 154.

[16]Ibid., p. 153.

[17]Egerton, p. 12.

[18]Doxey A. Wilkerson, "Compensatory Practices in Colleges and Universities," Information Retrieval Center on the Disadvantaged Bulletin, New York: Ferkauf Graduate School, Yeshiva University, Vol. II, No. 2, March 1966, p. 3.

[19]L. Richard Meeth, "Institutional Planning for the Culturally Different American Student," (Unpublished speech), Park College.

[20]John C. Flanagan, "Administrative Behavior in Implementing Educational Innovations," Paper presented at American Educational Research Association Meeting, February 8, 1968.

[21]Meeth. op. cit.

[22]Desmond L. Cook, Program Evaluation and Review Technique - Applications in Education, Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1966, p. 3.

[23]Wolfgang Jakobsberg, "Cost Effectiveness: What it is and how to use it," Management Review, Vol. 55, June 1966, p. 38.

[24]Harvy Hartley, "Limitations of Systems Analysis," Phi Delta Kappan, Vol. L, May 1969, p. 517.

[25]Meeth. op. cit.

[26]James M. Godard, "Recruitment and Support of Culturally Distinct Students," Paper read at 24th National Conference on Higher Education, sponsored by the American Association for Higher Education, Chicago, March 1969.

[27]Preston Valien, "Undergraduate Educational Opportunity Programs," In Proceedings, Council of Graduate Schools in the United States, San Francisco: The Council, 1968, pp. 47-52.

[28]Gordon and Wilkerson, p. 153.

[29]O. L. Deniston, V. A. Getting, and I. M. Rosenstock, Evaluation of Program Effectiveness, Public Health Reports, Public Health Service, United States Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, Vol. 83, No. 4, April 1968, p. 324.

[30]Deniston, p. 334.

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